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ABSTRACT

A process evaluation of Mississippi's Assistant Teacher Program (ATP)--which placed paraprofessionals in first to third grade classrooms--was conducted in 1986 after its third year of operation. The evaluation examined the effectiveness of teacher development materials and inservice education; tasks performed by assistant teachers and their characteristics; teachers' interprofessional relationships; program effects on school operations, student attitudes, and achievement; and teacher role. A sample of 323 supervisors, 1,623 assistant teachers, and 1,815 professional teachers was selected. A questionnaire was developed and analyzed separately for each group. Most assistant teachers had attended college, considered the staff training effective, and were pleased with their assignments. Further use of assistant teachers was suggested for teaching basic skills to students. Two-thirds of the teachers reported that they had reexamined their own teaching techniques after having an assistant teacher in the classroom. Over 90 percent were satisfied with the performance of the assistants. Dissatisfied teachers were generally beginning teachers and very experienced teachers. Attitudes toward student motivation, achievement, and extending ATP into kindergarten were positive. Greater communication was recommended. Favorable responses were also reported by supervising administrators. (GDC)

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A PROCESS EVALUATION OF THE ASSISTANT TEACHER PROJECT DURING ITS THIRD YEAR OF OPERATION

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The Problem

The Assistant Teacher Program which places a paraprofessional in every public school classroom for the first three grades was in its third year of operation during the 1985-86 school year in Mississippi. The need existed to determine how well the program components were operating at this stage.

Previous process evaluations conducted during the first two years of the program's development had been made by having professional teachers and school administrators respond to questionnaires eliciting information regarding how well the Assistant Teacher Program was working. In 1983-84, the first year of the Assistant Teacher Program, first grade teachers and their supervisors evaluated the effectiveness of the program. Then, this process was completed by second grade teachers and their supervisors during the second year of the study, 1984-85, when assistant teachers were placed in second grade classrooms.

In this third year, when assistant teachers worked in first, second and third grade classrooms, a need was felt for looking at the overall effectiveness of the program's operation. It was also felt that the perceptions of the assistant teachers, in addition to those of the professional teachers and supervisors, should be included in this evaluation process.

Objectives of Evaluation

The following objectives were established for structuring this evaluation:

(1) To determine the effectiveness of the use of staff development materials provided by the State Department of Education for use in inservice programs for teacher-teacher assistant instructional teams.

(2) To determine the types of tasks being performed by assistant teachers relative to those projected in the Assistant Teacher Program objectives.

(3) To determine the personal and educational characteristics of assistant teachers participating in the program.

(4) To examine the quality of interpersonal relationships and professional associations between assistant teachers and teachers as reported by members of these two groups.

(5) To determine changes in school programs/operations which have resulted from implementation of the program.

(6) To determine the perceived effects of the ATP in promoting attitudes of students toward learning and their achievement as assessed by standardized tests.

(7) To assess the extent of use of assistant teachers as substitute teachers, rather than in their designated roles.

(8) To determine how well the assistant teachers performed, as perceived by their teacher team members and by supervisors.

(9) To determine major perceived strengths and weaknesses in the current program's operation.

(10) To make recommendations regarding needed changes in program operations.

Research Procedures

Sample Selection. Because of the large involvement of assistant teachers, professional teachers and supervisors in the program in Mississippi, it was decided to select a random sample of subjects to participate in the study. Schools in which the classroom groups of students had already been chosen for participation in standardized testing activities were used as the instructional centers whose participating teachers, assistant teachers and administrators would serve as subjects for the process evaluations. Participating classrooms were stratified by school system so that each school district would have at least one participating instructional team at each respective grade level who had been chosen in a random manner within the district. Then, an additional 46 classrooms were selected at each grade level in a random manner from the state as a whole. Administrators, teachers and assistant teachers

working with grades one, two and three in the schools selected for standardized data collection in the manner described were requested to provide data for the process evaluation.

The sampling procedure resulted in receiving useable responses from 323 supervisors, 1,623 assistant teachers and 1,815 professional teachers. These subjects were considered to be representative of the respective populations of their respective groups for the State of Mississippi as a whole.

Instruments. Three separate questionnaires were planned for the assistant teachers, teachers and supervisors, respectively. The Assistant Teacher Questionnaire contained items for securing demographic and personal data relative to age, race, educational level, experience as assistant teachers or working as Chapter 1 aides, and amount of college work done. Assistants were also asked to assess the effectiveness of staff development programs, their relationship with their professional teacher team member, their use as a substitute teachers and their general satisfaction with their assignments. More specifically, assistant teachers were requested to report their performance relative to 31 potential tasks, some of which were considered appropriate and some inappropriate for assistant teachers, as based on the program objectives for the Assistant Teacher program.

The Teacher Questionnaire contained items relative to changes in teaching techniques resulting from the Assistant Teacher Program, effectiveness of staff development activities

for facilitating an effective instructional team, effectiveness of the ATP in general for promoting achievement and positive attitudes among students, satisfaction with the performance of teacher assistants, and strengths and weaknesses of the program.

The Supervisor's Questionnaire included items eliciting the administrator's perceptions of the effectiveness of staff development programs for assisting administrators, teachers and assistant teachers in understanding their roles in the Assistant Teacher Program. Administrators were also asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the ATP in both process and perceived product dimensions.

These instruments were prepared by Dr. Cathy Grace, Director of Early Childhood Programs in the Mississippi State Department of Education, with the assistance of the principal investigator. The Teacher Questionnaire and the Supervisor Questionnaire were similar instruments to those administered to teachers and supervisors during the first two years of the study. The Assistant Teacher Questionnaire was prepared new for this year's study.

Data Collection and Analysis. Instruments were mailed to each of the participating schools by personnel in the State Department of Education and completed questionnaires were returned to that group. Data were analyzed through use of computer facilities at Mississippi State University. Descriptive statistics and nonparametric measures, such as chi square, were employed for data analysis.

Results of Study

Analysis of the data were done for the three separate groups whose responses were studied: assistant teachers, teachers and administrators. Following are the results of the study as reported for responses of each group. Separate sets of specific questions are given for structuring data analysis for each of the population subgroups.

Responses of Assistant Teachers

Questions Asked

The following questions were formulated for answering by the assistant teachers:

1. What were the descriptive characteristics of the assistant teachers?
2. How effective was the staff development program?
3. What work conditions and teacher relationships existed for assistant teachers?
4. How frequently did assistant teachers serve as substitute teachers?
5. Which tasks were performed by assistant teachers most frequently?

Descriptive Characteristics of Assistant Teachers

Age. Age ranges of assistant teachers included in the sample are given on Table 1. The ages of the groups ranged from less than 20 years to 70, with 39.1% of the group (n=635) in the 26-35 years age group.

Table 1

Age of Assistant Teachers

Age Category	Percentage	
	N	%
20 years or fewer	56	3.5
21-25 years	300	18.6
26-35 years	625	39.1
36-45 years	354	21.8
46-55 years	113	6.7
Over 55 years	49	3.0

Race. Over 55% of the assistant teachers were white and 38.6% were black. Only 0.4% of the assistants were of another race. Nearly six percent of the group did not record their race on the questionnaire. These data are given on Table 2.

Educational Level. Over 20% of the assistant teachers held college degrees and an additional 39.3% had earned some college credits. Nearly 32% of the group were high school graduates and 6.3% held GED diplomas. Data also indicated that 9.1% of the assistant teachers were currently enrolled in college courses at the time of the survey. See Tables 3 and 4.

Work Experience. Data on Table 5 show that about 9.3% of the assistant teachers had from 1-3 years experience as Chapter 1 aides, while an additional 16.1% of the group had over three years of similar work experience. Approximately one third of the group (33%) reported one year of experience as an assistant teacher; twenty-eight percent had worked as an assistant teacher for two years; and 20% had worked as an assistant for three years. Nearly four percent of the assistant teachers reported more than three years of experience in that position, indicating they had either worked in pilot studies or in similar positions prior to the implementation of the Assistant Teacher Program.

Effectiveness of Staff Development Program

Nearly 86% of the assistant teachers, as noted on Table 6, felt that inservice activities had developed in them an awareness of program goals. A larger number (89.2%) felt

Table 3

Educational Level of Assistant Teachers

Level	N	%
GED Diploma	103	6.3
High School Graduate	516	38.1
College Credit	622	38.3
College Degree	327	20.1

Table 4

Current College Status

Criteria	N	%
Currently enrolled in college courses	147	9.1
Currently in degree program	146	0.0

Table 5

Work Experience of Assistant Teachers

Criteria	Assistant Teachers		Chapter Aide	
	N	%	N	%
None			1211	74.6
One year	535	33.0	91	5.6
Two years	456	28.1	33	2.0
Three years	328	20.2	27	1.7
Four-six years	31	2.0	81	5.0
Over six years	29	1.9	180	11.1

Table 6

Effectiveness of Staff Development Program
as Viewed by Assistant Teachers

Criteria	Overall %	First %	Second %	Third %
Staff development helped develop awareness of program goals.	85.8	84.7	87.2	85.7
Staff development helped develop awareness of assistant teacher's role.	89.2	87.1	91.1	89.6
Staff development enhanced awareness of teacher's role.	90.7	89.2	90.1	92.1
Staff development enhanced awareness of principal's role.	83.7	82.8	83.4	84.9
Program provided information needed for instruction.	88.6	87.3	87.8	90.9
Program provided information needed to work as instructional partner.	88.4	86.2	88.1	90.9

that staff development increased their awareness of the assistant teacher's role, 83.7% reported a better understanding of the principal's role and 90.7% of the assistant teachers perceived that their understanding of the teacher's role had also been enhanced. Nearly 89% of the assistant teachers felt that staff development programs had provided them information needed to work as an instructional partner. These data show that staff development activities were viewed as successful by a large majority of the assistant teachers.

Teacher-Assistant Teacher Relations

Over 90% of the assistant teachers, as reported in Table 7, felt that teachers used their assistant teachers to the fullest extent in promoting student achievement. Nearly 95% of the assistant teachers said that teachers provided them with information needed to do a good job. According to 86.9% of the assistants, teachers and assistant teachers teams planned together cooperatively each week for at least 30 minutes.

Nearly 90% of the assistant teachers stated they would request to be placed again with the same teachers, if given a choice. Also, 90% of the assistant teachers felt their job responsibilities warranted more salary than they received this past year.

Seventy-six percent of the assistant teachers who previously held positions as aides in Chapter 1 programs, reported that their duties had changed significantly as they worked as assistant teachers.

Table 7

Work Role, Work Conditions and Teacher Relationships
As Viewed by Teacher Assistants

Criteria	Overall* %	First Grade %	Second Grade %	Third Grade %
Duties have changed from that of teacher aide.	76.0	75.0	81.0	70.0
Assistant teacher would request placement with same teacher.	89.8	91.5	89.3	88.4
Teachker uses assistant to fullest extent.	89.6	91.5	89.3	88.4
Teacher provides assistant with information needed to do a good job.	94.8	95.3	93.4	95.6
Teacher and assistant plan together each week.	86.9	87.6	84.2	89.0
Job warrants more salary.	90.0	92.3	90.4	86.9

*Only 30.3% of assistant teachers had been teacher aides previously.

Assistant Teachers as Substitute

As shown in Table 8, only 9.1% of the assistant teachers reported serving as substitutes for teachers in classrooms other than their own. These assistants generally substituted only for 1-2 days (4.3% of total group), with only 0.9% of the total group substituting more than five days for these other teachers. In contrast, 54.8% of the assistant teachers had substituted for their own teacher partner, with 31.5% of the total group substituting for 1-2 days, 11.3% for 3-4 days and 3.5% substituting five or more days.

Utilization of Assistant Teachers

In order to identify accurately the daily tasks assistant teachers perform and to determine differences by grade level with regard to teacher utilization, assistant teachers were provided a list of tasks predetermined as appropriate, as well as some tasks that were considered inappropriate by the State Department of Education. The 1,623 respondents from grades one through three were to designate whether they performed the specific task Everyday, Most Days, Few Days, or Never. The following is a summary of those items which, when using a chi square statistical treatment, evidenced a significant difference at the .05 level in how assistant teachers were being utilized on a grade by grade basis. Percentages illustrating these relationships are given in Table 10.

The presence of the assistant teacher in the classroom is designed to promote the students' time on task. The success

Table 8

Assistants Used as Substitutes

Criteria	Overall %	First Grade %	Second Grade %	Third Grade %
Assistant Teacher acts as substitute for teachers in other rooms.	9.1	8.5	9.0	9.8
Assistant Teacher acts as substitute for own teacher partner.	54.8	57.0	55.9	51.2

Table 9

Number of Days Assistants Used as Substitutes

Criteria	No. of Days 1-2 %	3-4 %	5 or more %
Substituted for teachers in other rooms.	4.3	1.4	.9
Substituted for teacher partner.	31.5	11.3	3.5

Table 10

Comparison of Tasks Performed by Assistant Teachers

Tasks	First %	Second %	Third %	Overall %	Chi Square
1. Listen to individual students read.	53.4	62.8	64.9	60.8	55.12**
2. Assist individual students in specific instruction tasks.	45.9	49.4	52.6	49.6	25.75**
3. Review information with individual students.	45.9	53.8	59.9	54.5	34.57**
4. Drill individual students on facts designated by teacher.	55.3	61.5	67.4	61.6	44.00**
5. Work with individual students on a set schedule.	54.4	63.7	65.3	61.2	23.64**
6. Work with small groups of students on basic skills, reinforcing the teacher's work.	46.7	58.7	59.8	54.9	67.19**
7. Tell stories to small groups of children.	79.9	82.0	84.7	83.0	22.91*
8. Moderate small group discussions.	69.5	75.8	78.6	75.4	19.93*
9. Present audiovisual programs.	85.4	83.4	85.3	86.1	17.02*
10. Take small groups to library.	77.8	76.8	75.5	79.0	2.63
11. Record attendance.	67.4	65.4	63.5	66.6	10.25
12. Record lunch report.	65.8	61.8	62.0	68.0	9.16
13. Record grades.	76.3	77.2	74.4	76.8	12.10
14. Complete report cards.	69.3	72.5	74.3	72.8	19.66*
15. Pass out and collect papers.	58.2	61.8	65.1	61.5	20.19*
16. Grade homework papers.	68.1	68.0	67.8	67.9	9.10
17. Assist in supervision of outside.	75.1	75.9	75.6	75.6	3.90
18. Supervise outside play by self.	69.7	73.6	73.4	72.1	9.09
19. Plan with teacher.	57.3	61.5	58.7	59.2	9.16
20. Work with students in learning centers.	79.4	74.1	70.3	71.7	21.31*
21. Prepare learning centers for children.	78.8	76.4	75.4	77.0	6.09
22. Duplicate instructional materials.	72.9	72.7	73.4	73.0	3.51
23. Work with entire class on basic skills reinforcing the teacher.	68.9	69.7	69.1	69.2	14.93
24. Use teacher's instructional manual when planning instruction.	56.6	61.4	66.2	59.9	26.85**
25. Attend parent-teacher conferences.	74.7	76.3	73.6	74.8	4.10
26. Introduce new instructional material to students in small groups.	71.6	75.8	78.1	74.4	19.81*
27. Introduce new material to entire class.	72.1	76.1	75.1	74.4	11.98
28. Work on students' personnel files.	76.7	78.2	75.9	77.1	4.95
29. Discipline as teacher directs.	53.6	55.8	56.9	56.4	5.94
30. Discipline children without teacher direction.	66.9	66.2	68.1	67.1	8.06
31. Construct bulletin boards.	62.5	83.1	80.4	82.2	7.51

of the program is dependent upon the utilization of the assistant teacher by the classroom teacher. The State Department of Education produced and disseminated to school districts several staff development modules to acquaint teachers and assistant teachers with methods to best utilize the assistant with regard to the instruction of students. Training materials emphasized techniques related to direct interaction with students and methods for conducting reinforcement and review of concepts and skills previously introduced by the teacher.

In reviewing responses concerning instructional tasks with individual students such as listening to individual students read, assisting individual students in specific instructional tasks, and reviewing information with individual students, a significant difference in how assistant teachers are utilized by grade is evident. While over 32 percent of assistant teachers in all three grades indicated they never listened to individual students read, 21 percent in the first grade indicated they listened to students read on a daily basis. The percentages of second and third grade assistant teachers responding to the item were 15.4 and 12.2, respectively, who indicated daily performance of the task.

Assistance given to individual students with specific instructional tasks is another area in which a significant difference was noted. Over 43% of the assistant teachers in all three grades indicated they never provided assistance with specific instructional tasks to individual students. The 22% of third grade assistant teachers who responded they performed

the task most days was higher than the 19% of second grade assistants who responded in like manner. This same pattern of response to items continued throughout those relating to methods or techniques employed with individual students.

In the analysis of responses to tasks concerning individual students, first grade assistant teachers consistently demonstrated polarization of response. While the first grade assistant teacher respondents were larger in group size by 45 participants to those in grade two and by 56 to grade three, they responded to the "Everyday" response and to the "Never" response in greater number than the respondents from grades two and three as measured by the percentage calculated on every task listed. This observation could be the result of several factors. First grade assistant teachers as a group have been involved in the program for the longest period of time. If the assistant remains with the teacher to whom she was paired for several years a routine will be established based on teacher direction. The emphasis placed on individualization of student instruction is determined by the teacher. Reviewing the sum total of tasks related to individualized instruction, it is apparent that assistant teachers are not being utilized to the fullest in the instruction of students on an individualized basis. Furthermore, it is evident that teacher emphasis on individualized instruction in the primary grades is not strong, especially in the first grade. Another factor which may be responsible for this lack of individual

assistance is that teachers feel the best utilization of the assistant teacher is for other purposes.

Statistically significant differences at the .05 level between grades was again noted when reviewing the responses concerning the utilization of assistant teachers in the instruction of small groups of students. Drilling students on teacher designated facts was an everyday task for 19.3% of the first grade assistant teachers who responded. According to third grade assistant teacher respondents, 11.9% were engaged in the technique daily and 14.2% of second grade assistant teachers responded in a like manner. Of those first grade assistant teachers responding 41.8% indicated they were never engaged in drill of teacher designated facts with students, 34.3% of respondents from second grade and 29.3 percent of assistant teachers responding from third grade indicated they too had never performed the task.

The most dramatic indication of the lack of utilization of assistants for instructional purposes was found in reinforcing of basic skills introduced by the teacher. Of those responding, 51.6% of first grade assistants, 41.1% of second grade assistants and 38% of third grade assistants indicated they never worked with small groups in this manner. While the percentage decreases as the grade level increases, it is evident that teachers in all three grades are not properly utilizing their assistants with regard to appropriate instructional support procedures.

Instructional methods and teaching techniques change to accommodate more complex content material and to promote student independence and responsibility for learning as the student acquires more information. The observation of more first grade assistant teachers never being engaged in reinforcement of teacher-introduced basic skills than those in third grade is indication of a need for further staff development of the first and second grade teachers in the utilization of assistant teachers for instructional purposes. The reality of school curricula and teacher expectation of student performance would indicate more basic skill information presented to students at the first and second grade levels, with the third grade serving as the initial point of departure for use of those skills in related learnings.

The 1983 Assistant Teacher Program Guidelines and job description for assistant teachers indicated that the introduction of instructional material to students be conducted by the teacher. This practice was stressed in that the certified teacher in the majority of instances would be better qualified to introduce and explain new concepts and skills to students than the non-degreed or non-certified assistant. The survey responses by assistants to the task of introducing new instructional material to small groups of students indicate a significant statistical difference between grades at the .05 level in this area. Of the third grade assistants who responded, 44% indicated they introduced new material daily to small groups of students, while 34.1% of the first grade

assistants responded that they perform this task daily. The percentage of responding assistant teachers who never introduced new material to students ranged from 26.3% in first grade to 20.8% in third grade.

The difference in utilization of assistants by grade in performing this task can possibly be attributed to two factors. First grade assistant teachers may have received more thorough training through staff development sessions on the role of the assistant prior to the beginning of the program than those in the third grade. This could be related to the fact that more attention was given at the district level to procedures with regard to training of program staff during the first year of the program. The other factor could be the misunderstanding of the term "new instructional material" by those assistant teachers responding to the item. While the instructional materials may be new, the overall content may pertain to concepts or skills previously introduced by the teacher.

Utilization of assistant teachers in the preparation of learning centers was not significantly different from grade to grade. However, the utilization of the assistant teacher in working with students in learning centers was significantly related to grade level. Of the first grade assistant teachers responding, 30% indicated that most days they work with children in learning centers, and 16.9% indicated they performed the task daily. Second grade assistants responded at a rate of 23.2% that they worked with students most days in

learning centers and 17.9% indicated they were engaged in center work daily. Those respondents from the third grade indicated that 27.8% instructed students in learning centers most days and 18% indicated that it was a daily task for them. While the responses are encouraging, fewer than 50% of the assistant teachers in any grade were involved in the use of learning centers to instruct students on a routine basis. Since this is the primary method of instructional delivery to kindergarten students, it is critical that teachers in grades one through three modify existing large group/small group instructional practices to include learning centers as a viable means for the instruction of students.

With regard to record keeping and other clerical duties, there was little difference in how assistant teachers were utilized from one grade level to the other. Teachers in all three grades utilized the assistants in grading papers, completing student report cards, duplicating instructional material and working on permanent records of students.

The ten tasks done by more assistant teachers were: (1) present audiovisual programs; (2) tell stories to small groups of students; (3) work with students in learning centers; (4) prepare learning centers for children; (5) take small groups to the library; (6) work with students' permanent records; (7) record grades; (8) assist in supervision of outside play; (9) attend parent-teacher conferences and (10) duplicate instructional material. It was disappointing to find that assisting students in mastery of basal skills and

working with individual students were not tasks included in this group.

Conclusions

As a result of the information gathered from the survey the following conclusions are stated:

1. The assistant teachers, by majority, are well educated, with over 59% of the group having a college degree or having earned college credit.
2. Staff development programs were considered effective by over four-fifths of the assistant teachers.
3. Over 90% of the assistant teachers were well pleased with their teaching assignments and the assistance they received. Over 90% of the respondents were dissatisfied with the salary received.
4. Assistant teachers have been used as substitutes for their own teacher team member relatively frequently, but only 9.1% of the responding assistant teachers had served as substitute teachers for teachers in other classrooms.
5. Teachers in grades one through three need more training in utilization of assistant teachers with regard to instruction of students, specifically related to the assistants becoming more routinely involved in using teaching techniques for reinforcement of concepts and skills.
6. Teachers in grades one through three must expand and/or modify their instructional techniques to

include use of learning centers as a viable method of instruction of students.

7. Teachers in grades one through three should re-evaluate the techniques they employ for teaching basic skills and concepts seeking to utilize the assistant teachers more in the process.
8. With the utilization of assistant teachers by many kindergarten teachers during the 1986-87 school year, this survey should be repeated to include responses from those assistants as to how they are being utilized by teachers in the instruction of students.

Responses of Teachers

Thirteen questions were asked the professional teachers in whose classrooms assistant teachers were assigned. Answers to these questions were tabulated and are presented in this section of the report.

Questions Asked Teachers

The following questions were asked:

1. Has the presence of an assistant teacher in the classroom resulted in teachers' reexamining their teaching strategies?
2. Have staff development activities helped teachers utilize assistant teachers more effectively?
3. Have staff development programs provided assistant teachers with resources and instruction needed for improving instructional skills?

4. Are classroom teachers satisfied with the performance of their assistant teachers?
5. Is instructional material taught in a more thorough manner because of the availability of assistant teachers?
6. Is instructional material being taught at a faster rate because of the assistant teachers in the classroom?
7. Will higher achievement for students on standardized tests be a result of the Assistant Teacher Program?
8. Will more positive attitudes toward learning result from having assistant teachers in classrooms?
9. Do teachers help their assistant teachers to do a good job?
10. Have assistant teachers been used as substitutes?
11. Do teachers want assistant teachers in their classes?
12. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Assistant Teacher Program?
13. Do we need assistant teachers in kindergartens?

Responses to Questions

Reexamination of Teaching Strategies. On Table 11 are given the responses of teachers to the questions asked in the survey study. In response to the item inquiring whether the presence of an assistant teacher in classrooms had caused teachers to reexamine their own teaching techniques, 66.3% of the teachers said, "Yes." Nearly one fourth of the teachers, however, said they had not changed their teaching techniques

Table 11

Responses of Teachers to Evaluative Questions

Question	Yes %	No %	Undecided %
1. Presence of an assistant teacher in classroom has caused teachers to reexamine teaching techniques.	66.3	24.1	6.8
2. Staff development program helped teachers to utilize assistant teachers in classroom.	73.9	18.8	6.2
3. Staff development program provides assistant teachers with resources and instruction for improving teaching skills.	70.4	15.0	12.9
4. Work performance of assistant teachers is satisfactory.	92.8	3.2	2.8
5. Instructional material is taught in more thorough manner because of assistant teacher.	69.4	9.6	6.0
6. Instructional material is taught at a faster rate with ATP.	60.6	16.9	8.5
7. The ATP will result in a positive attitude toward learning by pupils.	88.1	4.1	7.1
8. The ATP will result in a higher achievement level for students on standardized tests.	61.0	6.0	16.9
9. Information is provided that will improve assistant teacher's classroom performance.	96.7	.7	2.0
10. Assistant teacher is desired in classroom next year.	93.9	2.4	3.5
11. Same assistant teacher is requested for next year.	90.8	4.1	4.4
12. Assistant teachers are needed in kindergartens.	91.6	2.3	5.1
13. Assistant teacher has been used as a substitute in other classes.	9.1	89.4	
14. Assistant teacher has served as substitute in teacher partner's class.	46.0	53.2	

as a result of the Assistant Teacher Program. With the additional resources provided by a paraprofessional in classrooms, it appears that teachers would desire to change teaching techniques in order to take advantage of this resource.

Staff Development Programs. Nearly three-fourths (73.9%) of the teachers felt that staff development programs had assisted them in helping to utilize assistant teachers more effectively. Nearly 20% of the teachers, in contrast, felt that staff development programs either were not available or were ineffective in assisting them to work better with assistant teachers. Also, 70.4% of the responding teachers felt that staff development programs provide assistant teachers with resources and instruction needed for improving the instructional skills of the paraprofessionals. Fifteen percent of the teachers felt that staff development programs were not helpful in providing assistant teachers with needed skills. In conclusion, then, staff development programs, as viewed by three-fourths of the teachers, are effective.

Satisfaction with Work Performance of Assistant Teachers. Over 90% of the teachers were satisfied with the work performance of their assistant teachers. Those generally dissatisfied were beginning teachers and those who had taught for longer periods of time. Beginning teachers appeared to be uncertain about their relationship with assistant teachers and, in three specific cases, stressed their desire to teach in their own classrooms without assistant teachers.

Improvements in Instruction. Two questions on the survey instrument inquired whether teachers felt that instructional material were covered more thoroughly or faster as a result of the Assistant Teacher Program. Nearly 70% of the teachers felt that instruction was being done more thoroughly with assistant teachers. Only 60.6% of the teachers believed that instruction was being done at a faster rate. Teachers pointed out that enrichment activities and more drill activities resulted from use of assistant teachers. Rather than speeding up instruction, the assistant teachers gave more instructional time to use to fit individual needs.

Improvement in Achievement. Does the Assistant Teacher Program result in higher achievement levels fore students of standardized tests? Sixty-one percent of the teachers predicted that assistant teachers would help to develop higher levels of achievement for students. Those opposed to that position felt that achievement rates of children in their classes could not be improved greatly without wide changes in the current situation. Those teachers doubting that achievement would be improved came either from schools with achievement levels ranking high in national norms or from those schools where students had very rural, low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Improvement in Attitudes. Nearly 90% of the teachers felt that assistant teachers in the classroom had aided in promotion of positive attitudes of children toward learning.

Strengths of Assistant Teacher Program. Following are strengths of the Assistant Teacher Program cited by the teachers: (1) Provision of time for more individual attention to students, (2) Provision of additional supervisory assistance which has lower the student-teacher ratio and allowed more time for enrichment programs, (3) Keeping students more on-tasks, (4) Provision of more remedial help, (5) Allowing for correction of children's mistakes on written work more quickly, (6) Provision of more clerical assistance for teachers, (7) Provision for locating more effective instructional material and (8) Relieving teacher frustration.

Program Weaknesses. Under the present system, little or no time is provided for planning by the teacher-assistant teacher instructional team. Lack of communication, according to several teachers, results in conflicting instruction goals for teacher-assistant teacher teams. A third weakness cited was lack of instructional materials for use with different levels of students. The need for different materials was specifically cited when reteaching or remedial instruction was attempted.

Need for Assistant Teachers in Kindergarten. The need for assistant teachers in kindergarten was verified by 91.6% of the teachers participating in the study. Only 2.3% of the teachers saw no need for assistants at that level. These same teachers were those who were opposed to the use of assistant teachers in general.

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Conclusions

The following conclusions appear warranted from the study of responses given by the teachers who work with assistant teachers:

1. Over one-fourth of the teachers have not changed teaching strategies since initiation of the Assistant Teacher Program. If maximum benefits are to be realized from the program, teaching methodology needs to be changed in order to take advantages of the new people resources.
2. Nearly one fifth of the teachers view staff development as being ineffective in helping them to work better with assistant teachers. In contrast, however, nearly three-fourths of the teachers claimed the inservice programs were effective. These data show that more attention should be provided to identifying the needs of a segment of the teachers needing more assistance and working to provide more effective inservice programs for that group.
3. Teachers were satisfied with the work performance of their assistant teachers and desired that the Assistant Teacher Program be continued.
4. Fist year regular teachers were the most critical group concerning the effectiveness of the Assistant Teacher Program. This observation suggests that programs in preservice teacher education may need to

be revamped to assist beginning teachers to be more comfortable in working with paraprofessionals in the classroom.

5. Teachers felt that assistant teachers in the classroom were more effective in promoting positive attitudes toward learning among students than in fostering higher achievement scores.
6. Teachers cited provision of more time for individual instruction, more supervisory assistance resulting in improved time-on-task for students, quicker turnaround time for correcting children's work and relief of teachers frustrations as major contributions of the Assistant Teacher Program.
7. Teachers noted problems in communications between instructional team members and in lack of time for team planning as major weaknesses in the program. Not enough instructional material was available for reteaching basal skill material. New material or different material is needed for reteaching.
8. Teachers supported the concept of transferring assistant teachers from third grade to kindergarten classrooms, if resources are not available for hiring assistants at both levels.

Responses of Administrators

Questions Asked

The following baseline questions were asked administrators who supervised the Assistant Teacher Programs in Mississippi schools:

1. Did inservice program materials assist in understanding the Assistant Teacher Program and the role of administrators in this program?
2. As a result of the Assistant Teacher Program, do administrators feel more involved with instruction by teachers in the first three grades?
3. Has the quality of instruction improved as a result of the ATP?
4. Are first and second grade teacher-teacher assistant teams functioning more effectively this year than in previous years?
5. At what grade level is the Assistant Teacher Program best utilized?
6. Is it recommended that this program continue in grades one to three next year?
7. Is it recommended that assistants in third grade be moved to kindergarten, if sufficient funds are not available for kindergarten assistants next year?
8. Has staff development in 1985-86 for teachers and assistant teachers improved with regard to meeting specific program needs?

9. Did the majority of content for the 1985-86 staff development sessions in the Assistant Teacher Program come from materials developed by the State Department of Education?
10. Are assistant teachers used as substitute teachers?
11. What are the principal strengths and weaknesses of the Assistant Teacher Program?

Data from Survey

Effectiveness of Staff Development. As shown on Table 12, 91.3% of the responding administrators felt that inservice materials provided assisted them in understanding the Assistant Teacher Program and their administrative role in that program. Only 3.1% felt that such inservice activities had not been helpful. Further analysis showed that administrators who had been in their positions longer were less supportive.

More Involvement of Administrators with Program. Eighty-seven percent of the responding administrators claimed more involvement with the instructional program in the first three grades after participating in the Assistant Teacher Program. Those who disagreed stated they were already heavily involved with this part of the instructional program prior to the beginning of the ATP.

Improvement in Quality of Instruction. Over 94% of the responding administrators felt that the quality of instruction in the first three grades had improved since initiation of the Assistant Teacher Program. Only 1.2% stated that no improvement had been noticed.

Table 12

Responses of Administrators to Evaluative Questions

Question	Yes %	No %	Undecided %
1. Did inservice program material assist in understanding ATP and the administrative role in that program?	91.3	3.1	5.0
2. Does administrator feel more involvedwith instruction in first three grades after ATP.	87.0	7.7	4.3
3. Has quality of instruction in first three grades improved as a result of the Assistant Teacher Program?	94.1	1.2	4.0
4. Are first and second grade teacher-assistant teacher teams functioning more effectively this year?	92.0	1.5	4.3
5. Is a continuation of the Assistant Teacher Program recommended?	82.0	9.0	6.5
6. If funds are not available for assistants in both grade levels, should assists in third grade be moved to kindergarten?	43.0	44.0	10.5
7. Have staff development programs improved this year?	83.3	4.0	11.8
8. Was majority of content for staff development programs taken from materials developed by SDE for instructional teams?	59.4	21.4	13.3
9. Are assistant teachers used as substitutes in other classrooms?	18.9	75.9	
10. Are assistant teachers used as substitutes for teacher partners?	57.3	39.9	

Better Functioning of Instructional Teams. Ninety-two percent of the administrators noted that teacher-assistant teacher teams in the first two grades worked better together in 1985-86 than in previous years. No improvement was recorded by 1.5% of the administrators.

Best Grade Level for Assistant Teachers. First grade was identified by 36.5% (n=118) of the supervisors as being the best grade level for utilizing assistant teachers. Second grade was claimed to be the optimum grade by 15.5% of the administrators, and 12.1% of the group felt that third grade was best. Nearly 30% of the group, however, noted that assistant teachers were needed more in kindergarten than in grades one to three.

Program Recommended for Continuation. As shown in Table 12, 82% of the administrators recommended continuation of the program; 9.0% recommended that the Assistant Teacher Program be discontinued and 6.5% of the administrators were uncertain. In all cases, tight budgets and the need to apply the money to other parts of the school program were cited as reasons for discontinuing the program.

Move Assistant Teachers to Kindergarten. Forty-three percent of the supervisors recommended that assistant teachers currently placed in the third grade be moved to kindergarten classes, provided that financial support were not available for employing assistants at both levels. Forty-four percent of the administrators, however, felt the assistants should be kept in third grade. Over 10% were undecided whether the

assistant teachers should be moved to the lower educational level classrooms.

Improvement in Staff Development. As reported in Table 12, 83.3% of the administrators felt that staff development for personnel in the Assistant Teacher Program had improved significantly since last year. Four percent of the supervisors had not noted improvements.

Staff Development Materials Provided by SDE. In response to the item inquiring whether the majority of staff development materials came from the State Department of Education, 59.4% of the administrators said, "Yes." Over 21% of the group reported reported use of more materials from other sources and 13.3% of the administrators were undecided concerning the use of source materials. In closer investigation, the larger school systems, particularly the separate school districts, were using materials from the State Department of Education less often. The smaller, more rural districts used the materials more.

Use of Assistant Teachers as Substitutes. Assistant teachers, according to 18.9% of their administrators, are used as substitutes for teachers in classes other than their own. Nearly 80% of the administrators said assistant teachers were not used as substitutes under these conditions. Nearly 58% of the administrators (57.3%) claimed that the assistant teachers were used to substitute for their own teacher team members.

Program Strengths. The following program strengths were cited most often by administrators in the Assistant Teacher

Program: (1) reduction in pupil-teacher ratio, resulting in more individualized and small group instruction; (2) improved time-on-task for students; (3) improved teacher attitudes; (4) more instruction can be given in basic skill areas in supervised drill sessions; (4) more reinforcement of learning and (5) improvement in classroom control.

Program Weaknesses. The major problem encountered in the Assistant Teacher Program as documented by supervisors was the need for better interpersonal relations between teacher-teacher assistant team members. There was also a reported need for having joint planning time for team members. In several cases the supervisors felt that insufficient instructional materials were available to take maximum advantage of the teams' personal resources. Many administrators felt the salary level for assistants was too low. A number of supervisors noted that a new reassessment of curriculum practices needs to be made to incorporate more effective use of the instructional team's effort to improve children's academic progress.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were made relative to the responses of supervisors concerning their evaluation of the effectiveness of the Assistant Teacher Program:

1. Inservice materials were effective in helping administrators to understand the Assistant Teacher Program and the administrator's role in the program.

2. Administrators were generally pleased with inservice training materials, mostly supplied by the State Department of Education. Inservice education activities were viewed as having been improved since the ATP started.
3. As illustrated by favorable responses from 87% of the administrators, they have become more involved in curriculum development in primary grades after implementation of the Assistant Teacher Program.
4. Assistant Teacher programs, as viewed by supervisors, have improved both the quality of instruction and the quality of instructional team operations.
5. More supervisors viewed first grade as the level for more effective implementation of the Assistant Teacher Program and fewer felt that third grade was the most effective level. Nearly one-third of the administrators favored moving assistant teachers from third grade to kindergarten classrooms, if money were not available to fund the program at both levels.
6. Assistant teachers were used relatively frequently as substitutes for their own teacher team members, but they were used only occasionally for substitutes for other teachers.
7. Program strengths cited by supervisors were: (1) reduction in pupil-teacher ratio; (2) increase in individualized and small group instruction; and (4) improved time-on-task for children.

8. More work needs to be done to improve the communication skills of members of teacher-assistant teacher teams. More time must be provided for joint planning by the instructional team. Curriculum practices need to be reassessed in order to better utilize the resources of assistant teachers in classrooms.

Implications of Study

Data showed that assistant teachers are performing well in classrooms. Over 90% of the assistant teachers were well pleased with their teaching assignments. Nearly 94% of the teachers expressed a desire to have an assistant teacher next year, and 91% of the teachers said, if asked, they would request the same assistant teacher next year.

Inservice programs providing staff development for personnel in the Assistant Teacher Program have functioned well for the majority of the teachers and teacher assistants, but more help is needed to assist teachers to utilize better the resources of assistant teachers as instructional partners. Over one-fourth of the teachers, however, had not changed their teaching methodology since implementation of the program. The additional personnel resources provided by ATP should allow for more individualized instruction, more enrichment and more small group instruction. About 20% of the teachers viewed previous staff development activities as ineffective in helping them to work better with their

assistant teachers. Administrators generally were pleased with inservice training materials, mostly supplied by the State Department of Education. Supervisors, by large majority, felt that instructional teams at the first and second grade level operated much more effectively in 1985-86 than in previous years.

These data show that, though staff development programs fit the needs of instructional teams in about 80% of the cases, there is a segment of teachers who need more indepth inservice training in the use of varying teaching strategies and curriculum materials to benefit maximally from the services of the assistant teachers. Assistant teachers need more help in devising methods for reinforcement of basic concepts. Assistant teachers need to be working more with children in individual and small group situations. Assistant teachers need to review or reinforce concepts for children, rather than introduce new ideas in their teaching. They need new materials for teaching the same concepts which have been introduced to the children by the teacher. Broader use of techniques for individualizing instruction, such as the use of learning centers, must be explored.

Assistant teachers do a wide variety of instructional, clerical and managerial tasks, but there appears to be a generalized need for these assistants to be employed more routinely in instruction of children, if maximum benefits are to be realized from the Assistant Teacher Program.

Only about nine percent of the assistant teachers appear to have been used as substitutes other than their own teacher partner during the past school year. This observation was confirmed through securing similar data relative to this issue from both the assistant and teacher surveys. In contrast, over 50% of the assistant teachers reported to have substituted for their own team teachers. The practice of using assistant teachers as substitutes in other classrooms should be more strongly supervised, if the goals of the ATP are to be met.

Beginning teachers were the most critical group of the ATP and its effectiveness. Teacher educators should be made aware of this response and be encouraged to develop skills in preservice teachers for working as members of instructional teams and for preparing instructional activities to be directed by others.

More effort should be expended by supervisors in developing better communications between teachers and their assistant teachers. Time must be provided for instructional planning by the two team members, if maximum instructional support is given to children.

In summary, after three years of operation, the Assistant Teacher Program is going well, as viewed by teachers, assistant teachers and administrators. Staff development activities have been sufficient for preparing the majority of the ATP teams to implement an effective instructional program for training children in the basic skill areas. More work,

however, needs to be done to assist approximately one fourth of the instructional teams in providing more individualized instruction and small group instruction for reinforcing children's development in basic skill areas.